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THE MORNING HERALD

BY E. W. HARRIS & SON.

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THOMAS DIXON'S "COMRADES."

Author's Caricature of Socialism Claimed to Be Absurd.

To the Herald:—Of all the screeds against Socialism, whether in the form of fiction or address, "Comrades," by Thomas Dixon, Jr., is perhaps the worst.

In literary ability it falls far below "The One Woman," but surpasses it, if it were possible, in the nightmare of moral chaos the author sees as the inevitable attendant of Socialism. Everybody of course recognizes Dixon's power to people his stories with flesh and blood characters and strong dramatic situations, and in "Comrades" he has not failed, but it is a singular fact that of all the readers I have heard express themselves not one has commended either of these stories. "I have read 'Comrades,' but I don't like it," is the universal expression. There is a reason for this, and, aside from the (un)imperial status where the author paints as the social state—which would make modest women refrain from approving it—Dixon some times puts into the mouth of his characters an indictment of the existing Order so wholly unanswerable that its supporters even dread to see it in print. On the other hand Socialists brand his caricature of Socialism as utterly absurd, and maliciously so. Yet with everybody professing to dislike these novels, they are everywhere largely read, and the reason for this can only be a growing desire to know something about Socialism.

For this purpose, "Comrades" is not wholly void of value, although its socialist State is a straw man, purposely set up to be demolished as a warning to the timid that however unbearable existing conditions are they are a paradise to what would prevail under the Socialist State.

The author opens his story in San Francisco, and its culmination takes place on an island sixty miles off the coast of California, christened by the socialist colony that acquired possession of it, "Ventura." This island at the time was uninhabited. More than a million dollars had been expended on it by a land speculating syndicate which failed. Young Norman Worth, just out of college, and whose father, Colonel Worth, was immensely wealthy, had become interested in Socialism. Under the magic power of beautiful Barbara Boreana, a New York girl, in the cause, he became an enthusiastic convert to Socialism.

As might be supposed young Worth's course caused a break between him and his father. He went into the movement with all the enthusiasm and vigor of youth. His was the conception of buying the island of Ventura and there, cut off from all the corrupting influences of the existing order establish the Socialist State and demonstrate to the world the feasibility of the socialist philosophy. He went into this work with such ardor that Colonel Worth seeing the impossibility of dissuading him conceived the idea of secretly helping him in the purchase of the island by contributing to the cause a million dollars, on the condition that the deeds to the island should be held in trust by Norman Worth for two years at which time he was to turn them over to the colony.

The author then describes the embarkings of two thousand men, women and children for this enchanted island, with a minuteness of detail interesting and suggestive. In the inception of this great scheme, leading characters are made to speak for and against Socialism. These arguments in many instances are worthy the readers attention. In the outset the intolerance of the capitalist class for the socialist is well voiced in Colonel Worth's exclamation:

"Yes, with Meiner rifles and Gatling guns, I'd mow them down as I would wild beasts loose in the streets of San Francisco."

"Merely for a difference of opinion?" interposed his son.

"If you want to put it so, Norman, yes. Opinions may lead to heaven or hell."

"But you believe in free speech?" persisted the boy.

"Yes. And that's more than any Socialist can say."

The author himself throughout the story exploits the idea on every occasion that there is no marriage under Socialism; that the sex relation is merely by "fraternity." He does not pretend to quote any socialist authority for this, but makes his characters argue it as the necessary attendant of the collective ownership of the

means of production.

Colonel Worth, in this connection, is made to support the foolish idea that a wife is property. He is driven to this resort to convince his son that if property is public women must likewise be public. The author conveniently avoids allowing the proposition to arise that if a wife is property, that by this fact she would today be subject to sale, rent, or gift, just as is other property—a more denigrating condition even than their conception of Socialism, yet this does not prevail simply because a man's wife nor any human being is longer regarded as property.

This scintillating defense of existing conditions may be found on page 101. But from page 97 on to the end of the chapter, in this argument between Colonel Worth and his son, the son's answers as a Socialist are simply absurd as representing Socialism. Yet they had to be. Socialism must be shown, and the reader be kept in ignorance to further this purpose.

Socialism does not teach: "From every man according to his ability; to every man according to his needs." Every man will receive under Socialism according to his service. His needs, and his power to supply them, will be a matter personal to himself, and wholly dependent upon the hours of service he chooses to render. It will be much or little according to his industry. The able bodied man who refuses to work will be permitted to live on air if he wants to. The State will compel no man to work. It will merely furnish the means of employment to all men. Every man will be permitted to choose his work. The pay of all work will be the same per day, but the number of hours constituting a day in the various employments will vary according to the over or under demand for workers in such departments. The State will exercise no compulsory power in any of the respects indicated. Human nature will be dependent upon to move people to act naturally, both as to their relation to society and to the work they will have to perform to live. The State having furnished the equipment necessary in all departments for the workers to use, will need to take less account of their condition than it does today, where it must furnish charitable institutions for the thousands that cannot find employment.

The hobby exploited to the limit in this story, however, is that Socialism means no home. The author has a common malice to state the socialist position. He houses two thousand people in one building, and never once applies for calling this socialism. He makes them quarrel, and have all kinds of disagreements and domestic difficulties, to show the absurdity of Socialism—as if Socialism stood for such insane drivel. But the story had to be written thus to afford the author an opportunity to demolish it. The colony system, exploited in this book to show this Socialism would be a failure, is denounced by socialists themselves as utterly impracticable, and I give the author credit for permitting William West, the socialist leader, to voice this protest when the utopian scheme of colonizing the island of Ventura was first broached by young Worth.

The most that Socialism are permitted to say in this story is at week and ill-fated as to be easily brushed aside by their opponents. Where the author permits them to say something of real value, it is at a time when the matter is not in controversy. These are instances already referred to where the author's indictment of existing conditions is so true and unanswerable that its beneficiaries dread to see it in print. There are such passages in this book, and the reader will find one striking example of it beginning on page 31 and continuing to the end of the chapter. The Socialist position against the humanity, folly and waste of war has been attacked, and Barbara Boreana on these pages, closing with Byron's words to martyr to progress, sounds truly the Socialist's position in an eloquent and unanswerable indictment that appeals both to one's common sense and patriotism.

Thus briefly, I have tried impartially to sum up the attributes of a book, designed purposely to attack Socialism, that is being circulated and read from every library. The picture it gives of the socialist movement is absolutely false and absurd. But in consequence it will put an aversion on the mind of every reader against Socialism which must be removed even before such a reader can take with fairness and unprejudiced mind on the movement.

Is any author professing to write for a purpose, justifiable in such a context? Is the truth itself so weak that it cannot be trusted? These are questions for the reader to ponder.

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STATEMENT OF THE CONDITION OF

Greenville National Exchange Bank

OF GREENVILLE, TEXAS.

MADE TO THE COMPTROLLER OF CURRENCY AT THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS, JANUARY 31, 1910.

RESOURCES.

Loans and Discounts.....\$640 677 02

U. S. and Other Bonds.....222 750 00

Premiums on Bonds.....None

Banking House, Furniture and Fixtures.....23 666 65

Cash, Exchange and Demand Loans.....606 112 15

Total.....\$1 392 205 82

LIABILITIES.

Capital.....\$200 000 00

Surplus and Undivided Profits.....48 737 22

Reserve for Taxes (1911).....1 362 75

Circulating Notes.....186 200 00

Deposits.....956 705 83

Total.....\$1 392 205 82

We certify this statement is correct.

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STATEMENT OF THE CONDITION OF

FIRST NATIONAL BANK

OF GREENVILLE, TEXAS.

MADE TO THE COMPTROLLER OF CURRENCY AT THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS, JANUARY 31, 1910.

RESOURCES.

Loans and Discounts.....\$507 954 42

U. S. Bonds and Premiums.....156 000 00

Furniture, Fixtures and Real Estate.....5 896 10

Demand Loans, Cash and Exchange.....500 217 71

Total.....\$1 170 068 24

LIABILITIES.

Capital.....\$150 000 00

Surplus and Profits.....20 656 25

Circulation.....150 000 00

Deposits.....819 411 99

Total.....\$1 170 068 24

We certify this statement is correct.

W. H. BUSH, President.

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